Reading Toolkit: Grade 6 Objective 2.A.6.f

Standard 2.0 Comprehension of Informational Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Informational Text

Indicator 6. Read critically to evaluate informational text

Objective f. Identify and explain language and other techniques intended to persuade the reader

Assessment Limits:

Significant words and phrases that have an emotional appeal

Effectiveness of words and phrases used to persuade the reader

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Lesson Seeds
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Activities

Place student in small groups and provide each group with a folder containing appropriate movie advertisements. Have students highlight words within the text that would make a reader wish to see the movie. Next each group should select one advertisement to share with the class. During the presentation they should identify words and phrases used by the advertiser and explain how those words appeal to people.

The teacher will model the reading of a short persuasive informational passage. During the modeling the teacher will point out words and phrases that have an emotional pull on the reader. Next, the teacher will place students in small groups and provide each group with a persuasive informational passage for which they will highlight words and phrases that appeal to a reader's emotions. Each group will then share their findings with the whole class identifying the words and explaining how they would affect a reader.

Prior to the activity, the teacher should introduce students to the persuasive techniques employed by authors: emotion-charged words, rhetorical questions, repetition, hyperbole, etc… Using that information, students will view multiple, appropriate television commercials and complete a chart like the one below.

Product	Technique/s Used	Effectiveness

Next, students should be placed in small groups where they can discuss the information on their charts. Each group should decide upon the most effective commercial and share their findings with the class detailing how well the technique matched the product and why the commercial was most effective. This activity should help students understand how persuasive techniques are used so that in the next stage, students can apply a modified procedure to print text.

Prior to the activity, the teacher should collect a variety of different informational passages like editorials, letter to the editor, magazine articles, etc… all of which should be appropriate and of interest to students. A search of the SIRS database will yield multiple articles from reliable sources. Place students with a partner or in small groups where students will read a sampling of articles and complete a chart like the one below.

Topic	Title of Article	Technique Used	Effectiveness

After the chart is complete, students should share their reactions to the techniques found in these sources and judge which techniques are most commonly used and why that might be so.

Clarification

Reading Grade 6 Indicator 2.A.6

To show proficiency of critical evaluation of informational text, a reader must form a number of judgments about a text. To begin this process a reader must preview the text and its features and combine that information with prior knowledge to set a purpose for reading. During and after reading, the evaluation of informational text requires a reader to determine the content of the text, the role of text features, text elements that make that text a reliable source, the author's opinion, argument, or position, the effectiveness and purpose of the author's word choice, and the effectiveness of the author's style. A full evaluation of an informational text requires attention to each of these elements.

To begin a critical evaluation of informational text, a reader must use prior knowledge and preview the text to establish a purpose for reading. Once a purpose is established, that is followed by a close reading of the text. Next, a reader must judge how well the text provides information for the stated purpose for reading. Then a critical reader should be able to verbalize or scribe an explanation or analysis of the text by focusing on specific sections of that text and detailing how that information meets or does not meet a stated purpose for reading.

If that purpose is not met, a critical reader should be able to identify those pieces of information that are needed to fully construct meaning. Additional information may include more details within the text, more text features, or adjustments to the organizational pattern or existing text features. To determine what is required for meaning, a critical reader should closely read the existing text and then assess the degree to which the text meets a reader's purpose. A reader should note particularly the organizational pattern of the text and see how well that pattern helps a reader construct meanings from important ideas in the text. Those gaps in information that make it difficult for a reader to construct meaning signal the types of additional information that are needed.

The analysis of informational text for reliability is an important aspect in the text's critical evaluation. A reader must first discern how much of the text is factual. Once the factual information is isolated, judgments about its accuracy are necessary. A reader should access information about the author and his/her credentials as a means of assessing the passage's reliability. Depending upon the subject of the text and how current the information is also a reliability factor. When available, a reader can access other texts on the same subject to see if there is a consistency in the information. Finally after looking at multiple texts on the same subject, a reader can determine if the initial text contains the same information as the subsequent texts or if the initial text presents information not contained in the others. A discrepancy in information could point to an inaccuracy in a text or to a more current source of information.

Once reliability has been established, a reader should carefully note elements of text that address the author's argument or produce clarity of the author's position on the topic. Additionally, a reader should be attuned to elements of bias in the author's presentation of material. After reading is complete, a reader must implicitly understand the stated or implied main idea of the text. From that basis of understanding, a reader should look at the construction of the author's argument, noting any evidence of bias in the argument and looking for a fair treatment of opposing views on the topic. At that juncture a reader should be able to judge the impartiality of the material or the inclination of the author to present a single view of the topic. Based on that text evidence, a reader can make a critical decision about the text's fullness or limits of use to him/herself.

After a reader knows how useful a text might be, a determination can be made about what additional information could help a reader construct meaning from the text. Active reading skills will allow a reader to note a stated or implied main idea in the text. Then a reader can identify additional information that would add to, clarify, or strengthen their understanding of the text or the author's viewpoint. A reader's suggestions for additional information could include, but not be limited to

- Text features such as bulleted lists, captions, graphics, italicized or bold print etc.
- Information to address readers' questions that were not answered in the text
- Context clues, footnotes, or glossed words to help a reader understand unfamiliar words and phrases

A critical evaluation of a text also demands that a reader detect words that authors use to affect a reader's feelings. A critical reader can determine a reason for the author's word choice and the response the author wished to evoke. At the center of any persuasive text is a strong opinion, and authors use words to their advantage to create a strong emotional appeal to a reader. Repetition, rhetorical questions, hyperbole etc…all have the power to sway a reader's perceptions. A critical reader is aware of the power of words and examines this word choice to discern the author's tone. For example, a critical reader should be able to discern the difference in tone between "The hero was brave as he flew into the battle alone." from "The pilot was foolhardy flying into battle without cover." A critical reader must also note the portion of text where repetitions occur and determine why an author would wish to draw attention to that portion of text. Critical readers are aware of these elements and should be able to determine if they enhance an author's viewpoint. Finally critical readers should isolate elements that are used purely for emotional appeal and are not supported by fact.

Ultimately a critical reader should be able to analyze an author's style which is how an author uses language to relay ideas. An author's particular style has a direct effect upon the meaning of a text. For example, authors may use formal language to convey the seriousness of material or informal language to address the entertainment value of a topic. Or an author may use an informal style with a serious topic to evoke a particular response and cause a critical reader to consider why an author would not match style to topic. That disconnect between style and topic has a critical effect upon construction of meaning. A critical reader should also note how the author forms and uses sentences. The constant use of long, involved sentences or short, choppy sentences or a combination of both can alert a reader to a variety of emphases within a text. An author might use this stylistic formula to draw attention to a particular idea or to diminish the effect of an idea. Using sentence fragments is another way authors can achieve those same effects. Finally a critical reader should be aware that how the author uses language, makes choices about words, and constructs sentences that are planned so that a critical reader can develop insight into the author's intended meaning of a text.